

*Washington, DC* - On the day when Comcast and NBC Universal executives testified before House and Senate subcommittees, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today led six other House members in calling on U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder and Federal Communications Commission Chairman (FCC) Julius Genachowski to block Comcast Corporation's plan to acquire NBC Universal. The House members today sent letters to Holder and Genachowski, laying out a wide array of concerns about how the deal would limit public access to independent sources of information while further weakening localism, diversity, and competition across the country.

"If Comcast successfully acquires NBC Universal, the American people will be faced with more media consolidation, fewer independent sources of information, and higher cable bills. The media conglomerate that would be created under this proposed deal would control content production and content distribution at an unprecedented level and it would stifle the growing trend of accessing premium content online regardless of one's broadband provider," said Hinchey, the founder and chairman of the congressional Future of American Media Caucus. "This merger would further limit the American people's access to a wide array of information and broadcast content that is inherently necessary for a properly functioning democracy. The Comcast-NBC Universal deal must be blocked for the good of the American people."

The full text of the letters to Holder and Genachowski from Hinchey, Congresswoman Donna Edwards (D-MD), Congressman John Olver (D-MA), Congressman Bob Filner (D-CA), Congressman Pete Stark (D-CA), Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey (D-CA), and Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY) follows:

February 4, 2010

The Honorable Eric Holder

Attorney General of the United States

U.S. Department of Justice

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Room 1145

Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Holder:

We are writing to express our opposition to Comcast Corporation's acquisition of NBC Universal. If this deal is approved, it would further consolidate a U.S. media industry that is already controlled by a handful of corporate conglomerates. Localism, diversity, and competition in today's media, all of which are severely weak, would be nearly lost. At a time when it is critically important for the public to be able to access independent sources of information, we believe this acquisition should not go forward and urge you to reject it.

Over the last twenty years, the U.S. media industry has experienced massive consolidation. Today, five companies own the broadcast networks, 90 percent of the top 50 cable networks, produce three-quarters of all prime time programming, and control 70 percent of the prime time television market share. These same companies own the nation's most popular newspapers and networks also own over 85 percent of the top twenty internet news sites. There has also been a severe decline in the number of minority owned broadcast stations. In 2007, minorities owned just 3.2 percent of the U.S. television stations and 7 percent of the nation's full power radio stations, despite making up more than 34 percent of the population.

If Comcast's acquisition of NBC Universal is allowed to proceed, the company would control content production and content distribution at an unprecedented level. A Comcast-NBC conglomerate would own the nation's largest cable system, one of the nation's largest networks, 27 broadcast television stations, 14 national cable channels, seven production studios, and several of the fast growing internet properties.

This widened control over the public's access to information would have extremely negative consequences and raises important anti-trust issues. Comcast would be in a powerful position to advance its networks and its programming at the expense of others because it will control the cable system most people use to watch television, as well as numerous additional television

broadcast stations. And it would further limit the public's access to independent sources of information, which is absolutely essential to a well-functioning democracy.

The Supreme Court, on numerous occasions, has upheld the right of the government to establish media protections, acknowledging that a monopolization of ideas is antithetical to our democracy. In 1945, the Court declared that, "the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources is essential to the welfare of the public, that a free press is a condition of a free society." In 1969, the Supreme Court stated, "It is the purpose of the First Amendment to preserve an uninhibited marketplace of ideas in which truth will ultimately prevail, rather than to countenance monopolization of that market, whether it be by the Government itself or a private licensee."

The debate over the direction of media in America is one of the most, if not the most, critical issues we face today. There is no issue more central to the future of a properly functioning democracy than how Americans receive information. We hope you will reject this acquisition and, instead, take steps to reduce the consolidation of the U.S. media industry.

Sincerely,

Maurice Hinchey and his six House colleagues

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February 4, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski

Chairman

Federal Communications Commission

445 Twelfth Street, SW

Washington, D.C. 20554

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produce three-quarters of all prime time programming, and control 70 percent of the prime time television market share. These same companies own the nation's most popular newspapers and networks also own over 85 percent of the top twenty internet news sites. There has also been a severe decline in the number of minority owned broadcast stations. In 2007, minorities owned just 3.2 percent of the U.S. television stations and 7 percent of the nation's full power radio stations, despite making up more than 34 percent of the population.

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